



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

September 13, 2012

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Dear Chairman Foster and Members of the House Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee:

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's largest and most effective non-profit animal protection organization, with more than 415,000 members and supporters in Michigan, opposes HB 5834 and urges a "no" vote from the Committee.

The gray wolf in Michigan was driven to the brink of extinction and placed on the Endangered Species List. Although the population has increased to a recent count of 687, and the wolf was federally delisted on January 27, 2012, state management should be undertaken with great caution. Adding wolves to the list of game animals in our state will undermine the long term survival of the wolf in Michigan. Our state's principal goal should now be the resolution of wolf conflicts with farmers and dog owners, not the hunting of wolves.

In 2006 the Wolf Management Roundtable—a broad coalition of conservation, wildlife, environmental, tribal, farming, law enforcement, and humane organizations—convened to establish guidelines if delisting were to occur. While roundtable members could not reach a consensus on the viability of establishing a post-delisting hunting season to reduce wolf-related conflicts, the group agreed in its final report that a quota hunt was not a scientifically sound method of addressing wolf management. It stated, "...setting numeric goals for wolf abundance at large geographic scales should be avoided because it would not necessarily reduce negative interactions, could unacceptably restrict positive interactions desired by the public, and could promote an inaccurate public perception regarding the relationship between wolf numbers and the risk of conflict." The report went on to say, "Previous management experience suggests most wolf-related conflicts are best handled on a case-by-case basis, and managing individual conflicts by reducing wolf numbers at a broad geographic scale would be inappropriate."¹

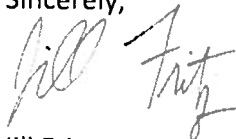
¹ "Recommended Guiding Principles for Wolf Management in Michigan: Report of the Michigan Wolf Management Roundtable to the Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources," November 2006.

Further, the citizens of Michigan have made it clear that they do not support the hunting of wolves. In 2010, Michigan State University conducted a statewide public opinion poll and found that a large majority of Michigan residents agreed that wolves have value, and a minority agreed they would hunt or trap wolves if such activities were legal.² The study adds, "Most residents, including hunters, Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP) residents and minorities, highly value wolves, are not interested in hunting them and support the role of science in making decisions." And a 2004 survey by Angela Mertig found overall high support for wolf recovery efforts, and that as long as wolves did not injure people, the majority of residents supported a "hands-off" approach. That study reiterated that Michiganders do not support consumptive uses—that is, hunting or trapping—of wolves in our state.³

The DNR now has a thoughtful, comprehensive, and effective post-delisting management plan, passed by the legislature in 2008, that allows farmers and dog owners to take lethal actions when non-lethal measures are ineffective. Farmers are compensated for verified losses caused by wolves, and a grant is available to provide non-lethal deterrence measures to reduce depredations. With these sound management measures in place, and with the lack of support for a hunt by the DNR's advisory roundtable, there is no scientific basis to justify a wolf hunt. We ask that you allow the DNR's management plan to work, and to pay heed only to scientific evidence and peer-reviewed research, not emotion or hearsay, when addressing wolf conflicts in Michigan.

On behalf of our many members and the citizens of our state who value and treasure the wolf, we ask that you do not support HB 5834.

Sincerely,



Jill Fritz

Michigan State Director

(517) 515-3839

jfritz@humanesociety.org

²"Toward improving the effectiveness of wolf management approaches in Michigan: insights from a 2010 statewide survey," Lute, Gore, Nelson & Vucetich

³Mertig, A. G. (2004). *Attitudes about wolves in Michigan, 2002. Final report to Michigan Department of Natural Resources*. Michigan State University: East Lansing, Michigan.